Death of Pilots of Surya Kiran Team

3378. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that IAF's acrobatic team "Surya Kiran" lost its two senior pilots in a crash near Karnataka on 18th March, 2006;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any enquiry has been instituted to find the causes of accident of Indigenously built MK II trainer aircraft;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The pilots were carrying out a 3 aircraft formation aerobatic practice mission. During one of the manoeuvres, the pilots lost control of the aircraft and it crashed.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) The cause of accident has been established as human error (aircrew).

(e) Does not arise.

Encroachment of land by Nepalese citizens

3379. SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that large portion of lands within Indian territory in the west Champaran and the adjacent areas in eastern Uttar Pradesh, in particular, along the Indo-Nepal border have been growingly encroached upon by citizens of Nepal who are unauthorisedly occupying these lands and residing therein breaching the territorial integrity of India;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of action taken contemplated, if any, for freeing our lands from encroachers and restoration of the country's territorial integrity?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) There are differences of perception on the alignment of boundary between India and Nepal in some regions including the major difference in Narsahi and Susta regions in the West Champaran. In Susta region, shifting of course of Gandak river, the mid-stream of which formed the boundary as per Treaty of Sugauli, has resulted in claims and counterclaims by both sides. Preliminary survey of the area by Government indicates that some encroachment has been reported so far in case of adjacent area of Uttar Pradesh.

India and Nepal have established a Joint Technical Committee (JTC), with the objective of *inter alia* resolving the differences of perception on the alignment of boundary in various segments. The JTC is yet to complete its mandated tasks. Government has reiterated from time to time to His Majesty's Government of Nepal the need for an early resolution of the differences of perception and the need for maintaining status quo in these regions pending resolution of differences of perception. Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) has been deployed along the Indo-Nepal border and it has instructions to ensure that there are no encroachments on the Indian territory.

Vacant posts of officers in army

†3380. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of posts of officers in the army are lying vacant;

(b) if so, the comprehensive details thereof;

(c) the reasons of their lying vacant for last several years; and

(d) by when these vacancies will be filled by Government?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) 11256 (27%) posts are vacant in the rank of Lt. Col. and below as on 1st January, 2006. There is no shortage in the ranks of Col. and above.

(c) and (d) The main reason for shortage in the Army is non-availability of sufficient number of suitable candidates meeting Army's laid down criteria

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.